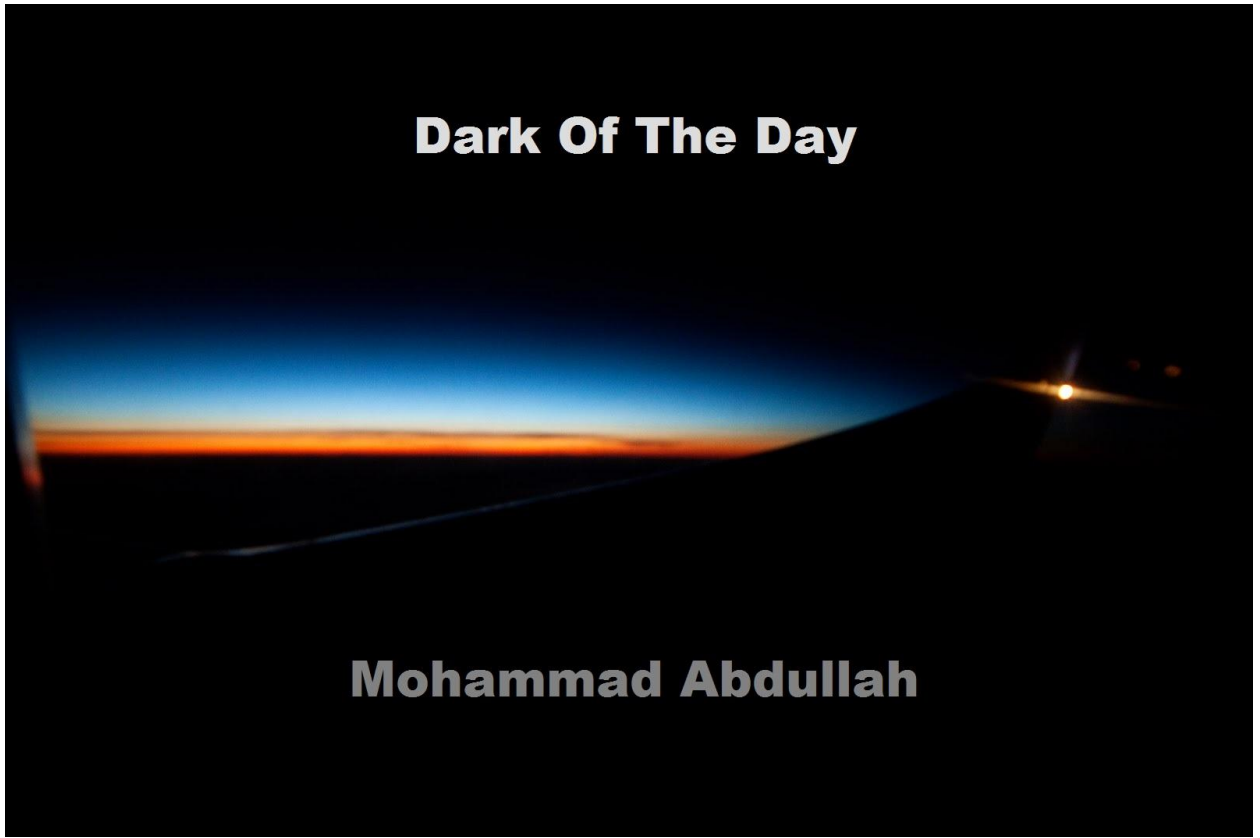


# **Dark Of The Day**

**Mohammad Abdullah**



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I couldn't sleep last night. No, I couldn't sleep the night before that too. Who is to blame anyway? Dr. Yin told me to stick my head out and tuck some life back into my body, but a *Schizophrenic* like me is more like to be an introvert, and eventually an insomniac. The more I think of it, the more I feel urged to resist the temptation to get out of the corner of my living room. A faint voice in my head wants me to bash through the apartment door and remind the world of my existence, but the project, the finals, I can't go out yet.

Why is it always dark in here? Why do I feel so cold? Oh, it's *Alaska*, silly me! But it doesn't seem right, I should take the paper off the windows, remove the blinds, and stare down the alley, watching people getting mugged. This isn't new, I regret the day when I sold my house in *Detroit* and chose to live in this hellhole just because I wanted to spend my holidays in a quiet and tranquil place, and the rent could let me save for a better apartment. Alaska enticed me in every way when we spent our summer here. I felt like I belonged here, a captivating familiarity exhorted me to come back here. Why do I keep forgetting that? I should better write that down.

The only light I have here is of that static TV I didn't want to turn off. There's no cable, no internet, no cellphone reception and no one to talk to but myself. The *landlady* was kind enough to provide me with a week's supply of food, I wonder why nobody rented this place besides myself. But there's always a creaking sound from upstairs and the sound of scrubbing coming from my bedroom, where I haven't been since I've moved here, I guess. This foggy brain of mine, nothing but a pit of hate and self loathing.

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Self loathing? Because of *Daisy*, obviously. Daisy and I had been the best of friends since childhood, and honestly, she's the only reason I've shoved my way through college. All the years spent together, I felt funny down my waist whenever I saw her. Her warm hands filling mine, and her head on my chest whenever she was sad felt like eternity to me. After my parents passed away, I was devastated. If it wasn't for her, I would've been one of those muggers down there living without an ambition. But I chose a different path, I made *HER* my ambition. I owed my life to her, and intended to marry her after I graduate. I remember her joining me on our journey to Alaska, and she must be staying a block away.

No matter how much I long to see her, it's my body that fails to co-operate. I can't gather the guts to get out and knock at her door, for the only time I saw the perfect opportunity and summoned up the courage to propose to her, a bolt from the blue staggered me. I remember wanting to get on my knees and presenting the ring, but she was perplexed. Her eyes were wandering here and there, as if they were searching for someone.

"Daisy, I—I wanted to—tell you—something." But as she turned her gaze towards me, and before I could get on my knees to present the ring to her, she hollered, "Tom! I'm here!" and hurried to the man standing at a distance, clinging to his chest and—kissing him—right before my eyes.

The meaning was clear to me, I had been living a lie. The woman I owed my life to, overlooked my love. *Tom*, of all men, the jerk whom I had always considered to be her classmate, why him? How come she never told me about him and her? I looked away pretending like I didn't see it, and put the ring back in my pocket. She gasped and rushed towards me.

"Nate, do you remember Tom, my classmate?"

I reluctantly nodded.

"He proposed to me last week. We're getting married after college!"

That was it. I was devastated. I stared at them silently, and walked away without saying a word. She kept calling my name but my heart just couldn't bear it any longer. Glaring at the ring that was supposed to seep into Daisy's hand, I tossed it in the trash, discarding all her memories with it. That was a day I never wanted to remember, but never wanted to forget either.

The weather was pleasant today. It hadn't been long enough when it started to pour, once in a blue moon. I could hear the pitter patter, and the exhilarated shrieks of people looking for shelter. In spite of wanting to end this streak of lethargic sittings, I just can't get up. Am I experiencing one of those false awakenings people keep talking about? I've concealed myself from the world for too long, can't wait to finally walk out of the door without the burden of responsibility and remorse on me. But those unknown faces staring at me is nothing less than a nightmare. I've always been afraid of the dark, but now I'm addicted to the darkness of my seclusion from the world. At least I can shut my eyes without the fear of someone stabbing me pressing upon the back of my skull. But I can't rid myself of the regret eating me from inside. I have all the time in the world, yet most of that time is spent staring aimlessly at screens and recalling those fiery recollections of old times. What difference does it make anyway? I should probably head out.

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I heard a knocking at my door. I don't have any guests usually. No, I don't have any guests at all. The last person to ever have visited me is the landlady, collecting rent. That was the last time I saw a human. Wait, somebody knocked, I should better hurry.

"Nathan? I know you're in there." It was Daisy.

I resisted the urge to rush to the door and treat my scorching eyes with that divine face once again.

"You left without saying a word that day. Is something bothering you? Please tell me, I'm sure I can help."

I didn't answer. I could hear sobbing.

"Please, open the door, Nathan! I need you, and I'm worried sick about you!"

Long pause, an unusually long pause, until the TV was audible again. The sobbing was followed by an onrush of tears and loud crying, and my patience was blown to smithereens.

"Daisy, he's not gonna open the fucking door, just get the fuck down there!" Tom interrupted, heaving her by the arm and dragging her downstairs despite her cogent resistance.

She was weeping, yelling and calling out my name. I was numb, not a finger I could move. Sympathy, regret, anxiety and indignation blended to make narcissistic empathy, and I refused to get up. She got what she deserved, because she left my eternal love for her unattended. Amidst this odd self loathing satisfaction, remorse kicked in. No, that son of a bitch has no right over her, she's my best friend and I can't bear a single

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tear in her eyes! I sprang up with exasperation mesmerising me, and rushed to the door as if I were to knock it down.



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Locked! Where's the darn key? I began tearing the living room apart, fear and anger possessed me. Where could I have left the key? Forget the key, just break the darn door! I try to bash through the door, but either did I overestimate my strength, or the door suddenly turned into the Great Wall of China! I sprinted towards the window, and ripped the blinds apart. I saw Daisy being taken away by Tom, and I helplessly watched that eerie sight. The window is jammed, but I didn't give up. I hit the glass in order to break it, yet again I overestimated myself. I yelled uncontrollably.

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Light from the window had illuminated my apartment, and I could see the trash I was living by. Once again, I was secluded with my aghast thoughts and my deserted life. Am I living aimlessly? Am I not any different from those lowlifes striving to shove their way through life, achieving nothing and dying in vain? I sweep the dust away and look for the key, I can no longer stay in this hellhole, I want to escape from this reality I call routine. Before people think of me as dead and forget me, I must remind them of my existence. Why is it so bright all of a sudden? Street lights can't be that dazzling, and it's not even supposed to be daylight. I lift the top of the trash can, the insides of which are not any different from me and my apartment, and fish out the refuse from it. When all of a sudden, I caught a glimpse of that glimmering ring I tossed away. No, I refuse to let those memories haunt me once more. In a trance, I flung the ring away, and it hit the bedroom door, which gave a creak loud enough to gain my attention. Why hadn't I checked the bedroom? The key might be lying in there. I walk inside and alongside the door, I find the key lying by the ring. I loathed myself for not going in earlier, and reluctantly bent to pick it up, when the corner of my eye caught the sight of feet somehow not touching the floor. A chill ran down my spine—as I look up—to see myself, *hanging from the ceiling...*